

# REL Appalachia Ask A REL Response

Educator Effectiveness  
January 2021

## Question:

What is the impact of Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) professional development and training on K–12 student academic outcomes?

## Response:

Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based information about the impact of CRT practices and training on K–12 student academic outcomes. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. Ask A REL provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations in response to questions about available education research.

Following an established REL Appalachia research protocol, we searched for peer-reviewed articles and other research reports on the impact of CRT practices and training. We focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed the effects of CRT on K–12 student academic outcomes. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines. For more details, please see the methods section at the end of this document.

The research team did not evaluate the quality of the resources provided in this response; we offer them only for your reference. Also, the search included the most commonly used research databases and search engines to produce the references presented here, but the references are not necessarily comprehensive, and other relevant references and resources may exist. References are listed in alphabetical order, not necessarily in order of relevance.

## References

Duncan-Andrade, J. (2007). Gangstas, Wankstas, and Ridas: Defining, developing, and supporting effective teachers in urban schools. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)*, 20(6), 617–638. Abstract retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ777335>; full text available at [http://hillkm.com/yahoo\\_site\\_admin/assets/docs/gangstas\\_wankstas\\_and\\_ridas\\_defining\\_developing\\_and\\_supporting\\_effective\\_teachers\\_in\\_urban\\_schools.pdf](http://hillkm.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/gangstas_wankstas_and_ridas_defining_developing_and_supporting_effective_teachers_in_urban_schools.pdf)

*From the abstract:* “Drawing from three years of research in the classrooms of four highly effective elementary and secondary teachers in South Los Angeles, this article considers theories of teaching in urban contexts by examining effective practices in urban classrooms. It outlines an original framework of five indicators of effective teaching in urban schools and uses examples from practice to illustrate those indicators and their relationship to increased achievement. Finally, it discusses possibilities for better preparation and development of teachers in these areas of their practice.”

Feliz, V. A. (2020). Educational practices that decrease opportunity gaps in literacy. *Journal of Leadership, Equity, and Research*, 6(2), 1–21. <https://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/article/view/101>

*From the abstract:* “Historically, research in regards to the instruction of culturally and linguistically diverse students focuses predominantly on a comparison to mainstream culture as well as the use of primary language separate from the second language. The traditional approach focuses on a deficit lens, or perceived deficiencies of culturally and linguistically diverse students in comparison to a mainstream monolingual culture. This research perspective establishes one language and as a result, one culture, as dominant. Despite a large body of research on the need for high quality rigorous instruction to support linguistically and culturally diverse students, minimal research focuses on instructional approaches to support diverse student literacy. This paper discusses a review of the current research literature specific to evidence based practices to support academic literacy development in students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Overall, the research findings suggest that traditional approaches to academic literacy instruction are inadequate for developing academic literacy in culturally and linguistically diverse students.”

García, S. S., & García, C. F. (2016). Transformative professional development and the promotion of literacy through culturally responsive pedagogy. *CATESOL Journal*, 28(1), 175–194. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1111622>

*From the abstract:* “This article recounts a narrative of professional transformation inspired by the works of Paulo Freire and Gloria Ladson-Billings and advanced by a participatory action research (PAR) project. The PAR team for this case study, consisting of the university teacher educator as a ‘coach’ and a high school classroom teacher along with her students, examines the use of community-based knowledge in a form of ‘corrido’ (ballads) studies. In this process, the ballads become the basis for learners’ engagement with literacy activities in the context of what is known as a ‘heritage language’ Spanish class. The analysis focuses on the process of designing a culturally relevant pedagogy and ensuring its effectiveness through the examination of pre- and post-writing samples and students’ fluid identification with various ethnic labels.”

Johnson, C. C., & Fargo, J. D. (2014). A study of the impact of transformative professional development on Hispanic student performance on state mandated assessments of science in elementary school. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 25(7), 845–859. Abstract retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1043792>

*From the abstract:* “This paper reports the findings of a study of the impact of the transformative professional development (TPD) model on student achievement on state-mandated assessments of science in elementary school. Two schools (one intervention and one control) participated in the case study where teachers from one school received the TPD intervention across a 2-year period while teachers at the other school received no program and continued business as usual. The TPD program includes a focus on the core conceptual framework for effective professional development (Desimone, 2009) as well as an emphasis on culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and other effective science instructional strategies. Findings revealed that participation in TPD had a significant impact on student achievement for Burns Elementary with the percentage of proficient students growing from 25% at baseline to 67% at the end of the 2-year program, while the comparison school did not experience similar growth. Implications for future research and implementation of professional development programs to meet the needs of teachers in the realm of CRP in science are discussed.”

Mayfield, V. M., & Garrison-Wade, D. (2015). Culturally responsive practices as whole school reform. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies*, 16, 1–17. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1069396>

*From the abstract:* “Despite our best efforts, black children still lag behind white children in academic performance on standardized academic measures. Unconscious racism and our lack of ability to confront it present the most salient reason for the indefatigable prevalence of inequitable opportunities for children of color which undeniably result in achievement gaps. This study identified specific culturally responsive practices schoolwide in a middle school that is successfully closing academic opportunity gaps between White and Black students. The findings indicate professional development served as a conduit for ongoing discussions on race and building the cultural competency of staff. These discussions served to promote culturally responsive practices found in leadership, parent engagement, learning environment, and pedagogy.”

Mette, I. M., Nieuwenhuizen, L., & Hvidston, D. J. (2016). Teachers’ perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy and the impact on leadership preparation: Lessons for future reform efforts. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 11(1). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1103652>

*From the abstract:* “The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of one school’s teacher-driven professional development effort to address culturally responsive teaching practices in a large district in a Midwestern state. During the 2011–2012 school year, a team of teachers and principals began a three-year long effort to provide job-embedded professional development intended to focus on delivering high-impact strategies to transform the educational practices of teachers through improving cultural competence. A survey was given to 120 fulltime certified teachers, and findings suggest that while teachers agreed most that the professional development helped examine views on poverty, they agreed least that the professional development helped close the achievement gap. Additionally, elective and special education teachers were significantly more positive than core subject classroom teachers in terms of how the research they read improved instruction and how the professional development provided impacted building-wide faculty instruction. Analysis of open-ended items highlight several themes, namely the professional development helped teachers by acknowledging cultural differences of the students they taught, but that ultimately the challenges of lack of time and implementation apathy impeded the success of

the professional development effort. These findings provide important insight for leadership preparation, particularly about supporting teacher-driven efforts, facilitating culturally responsive practices, and the reflecting on the pressures teachers face due to high stakes accountability and reform efforts.”

Powell, R., Cantrell, S. C., Malo-Juvera, V., & Correll, P. (2016). Operationalizing culturally responsive instruction: Preliminary findings of CRIOP research. *Teachers College Record*, 118(1). Abstract retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1086276>

*From the abstract:* “Background: Many scholars have espoused the use of culturally responsive instruction (CRI) for closing achievement gaps, yet there is a paucity of research supporting its effectiveness. In this article, we share results of a mixed methods study that examined the use of the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) as a framework for teacher professional development. The CRIOP is a comprehensive model and evaluation tool that operationalizes culturally responsive instruction around seven elements: Classroom Relationships, Family Collaboration; Assessment; Curriculum/Planned Experiences; Instruction/Pedagogy; Discourse/Instructional Conversation; and Sociopolitical Consciousness/Diverse Perspectives.”

### *Additional Ask A REL Responses to Consult*

Ask A REL Appalachia at SRI International. (2020). *What does the research say about state policies and programs to promote culturally responsive instruction, equity and inclusion, positive school climates, and to counter implicit bias in schools?* <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/appalachia/askarel/aar83.asp>

Ask a REL Mid-Atlantic at Mathematica. (2019). *What is the research on the effectiveness or impact of culturally responsive teaching practices on student outcomes?* [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/askarel\\_106.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/askarel_106.asp)

Ask a REL Southeast at Florida State University. (2019). *What research has been conducted on how equity training and technical assistance for school and district staff in the use of culturally responsive/relevant and restorative practices impacts school climate, particularly in middle school?* [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/aar/u\\_07-2019.asp](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/aar/u_07-2019.asp)

Ask A REL West at WestEd. (2018). *What is the relationship between culturally inclusive practices and student outcomes?* <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/Ask/Details/2>

### *Additional Organizations to Consult*

Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools:  
<https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter>

*From the website:* “NYU Metro Center focuses on driving equity and access in urban, suburban, and rural school settings—especially when confronting issues of difference across race, gender, gender identity, national origin, socioeconomic status, and so on... The Center boasts a broad and bold research agenda that touches topics ranging from girls and juvenile

justice to the education, language, and literacy of men and boys of color. Research activities also include (but are not limited to) topics on the impacts of poverty on student learning, multilingual education, school climate and discipline, disproportionality, gender identity and gender presentation, restorative justice, PBIS, RTI, culturally relevant education, ‘over-the-counter’ students, SIFE/SLIFE, abilities and special education, and diversity and integration.”

- Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education: <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/research/culturally-responsive-sustaining-education>

Teaching Tolerance: <https://www.tolerance.org/>

*From the website:* “Our mission is to help teachers and schools educate children and youth to be active participants in a diverse democracy. Teaching Tolerance provides free resources to educators—teachers, administrators, counselors and other practitioners—who work with children from kindergarten through high school. Educators use our materials to supplement the curriculum, to inform their practices, and to create civil and inclusive school communities where children are respected, valued and welcome participants.”

The Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning (CCRTL):  
<https://www.culturallyresponsive.org/>

*From the website:* “Our organization has transformed the mindset and skillset of thousands of teachers, administrators, and informal educators into practitioners of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning. The aim is accomplished through three broad strands of development: professional development, school/district development, and community development. With these three strands, we inform all stakeholders, concretely and practically, in what it means to be culturally responsive. We influence institutional policies and practices and we inspire changes in behaviors—individually and institutionally.”

## Methods

### *Keywords and Search Strings*

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

- (CRE OR CRT OR CSP OR “culturally relevant” OR “culturally responsive” OR “culturally sustaining pedagogy”) AND (training OR “professional development” OR PD) AND student AND (impact\* OR outcome\* OR achievement OR effect\* OR performance OR “academic outcome”)

## *Databases and Resources*

We searched ERIC, a free online library of more than 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), for relevant resources. Additionally, we searched the academic database ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the commercial search engine Google.

## *Reference Search and Selection Criteria*

In reviewing resources, Reference Desk researchers consider—among other things—these four factors:

- **Date of the publication:** Searches cover information available within the last 10 years, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- **Reference sources:** IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols receive highest priority. Applicable resources must be publicly available online and in English.
- **Methodology:** The following methodological priorities/considerations guide the review and selection of the references: (a) study types—randomized controlled trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order; (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected), study duration, etc.; (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.
- **Existing knowledge base:** Vetted resources (e.g., peer-reviewed research journals) are the primary focus, but the research base is occasionally slim or nonexistent. In those cases, the best resources available may include, for example, reports, white papers, guides, reviews in non-peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, and organization websites.

Resources included in this document were last accessed on December 23, 2020. URLs, descriptions, and content included here were current at that time.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by education stakeholders in the Appalachia region (Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia (REL AP) at SRI International. This Ask A REL response was developed by REL AP under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0004 from the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, administered by SRI International. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.